



**Date:** March 3, 2023

**Bill:** HB 950 - Maryland Native Plants Program

**Position:** Favorable

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Dear Chair Barve and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **HB 950 - Maryland Native Plants Program**, which will promote the use and sale of native plants and educate the public on the importance of native plants.

Native plants play a vital role in Maryland's ecosystems. They help improve water quality because, unlike their nonnative counterparts, they do not rely on additional watering, fertilizers and pesticides to thrive. They also play an important role in supporting local wildlife and migratory species. Planting native species attracts local pollinators from caterpillars to birds and crucial bees, which help us all by pollinating everything from cultivated crops to wildflowers.

More needs to be done to prioritize the use of native plants across the state. Creating a formal Maryland Native Plants Program will increase the benefits native plants provide to Maryland's wildlife by allocating additional resources to promoting their use and educating the public.

We applaud the bill for developing a voluntary certification program for native plant growers and retailers and for encouraging strategies to make native plants more identifiable to consumers. Consolidating a list of certified native plant growers and retailers within the University of Maryland Extension will also make it easier for those interested in purchasing native plants. The Commercial Maryland Native Plants list developed in HB 950 will make timely information and resources about native plants accessible to everyone in the state.

Saving wildlife and habitats is one of the National Aquarium's strategic conservation goals. This bill aligns with that goal by increasing awareness about the benefits and availability of Maryland native plants. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 950.**

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